DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 451 081 SO 031 963

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TITLE Collaboration: From Analogue to Digital & Back.

INSTITUTION Australian Inst. of Art Education, Melbourne.
PUB DATE 2000-00-00
NOTE 8p.; Paper presented at the World Congress of the International Society for Education through Art (InSEA) (30th, Brisbane, Australia, September 21-26, 1999). Funded by the Australia Council for the Arts.
AVAILABLE FROM Australian Institute of Art Education, Melbourne, C/Suite 125, 283 Glenhuntley Road, Eisternwick, VIC 3185, Australia.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Art Activities; *Art Education; *Cross Cultural Studies; Cultural Context; *Educational Cooperation; Foreign Countries; *Internet; Student Projects
IDENTIFIERS *Australia; Collaborative Talk; Getty Center for Education in the Arts; Teaching Perspectives; Technology Integration

ABSTRACT

Situated at a place where art meets collaboration and speaking to the 1999 InSEA World Congress's "Cultures and Transitions" theme, this paper tells a collaborative story that began as an "art-i-fax/art-e-post" project initiated via the Getty Center's educational Web site and has led to combined art projects and exhibitions across the globe. The initial project (involving the making of collaborative artworks by students of all age groups) led to an interest in the role that collaborative art plays in individual and group practice, as well as in art curriculum. The project has informed the authors' use of technology within the art realm and has led to an awareness of the "technology trail" that exists within and across cultures. The paper itself is constructed as a collaborative project over the Internet and examines the thoughts of an Australian art educator alongside those of a U.S. counterpart. (Contains 10 references.) (BT)

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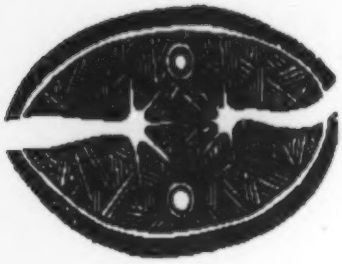

"Collaboration: From Analogue to Digital & Back"

by

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SO 031 963

Proceedings from the InSEA 30th World Congress "Cultures and Transitions"

21-26 September 1999
Brisbane Australia

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This project has been assisted by the Commonwealth Government through the Australia Council for the Arts, its art funding and advisory body.

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COLLABORATION: FROM ANALOGUE TO DIGITAL & BACK

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We have lived for too long in the dreary region of ***homo economicus****....But we are permitted to hope; to revive those great and optimistic words of Breton:* ***Perhaps the imagination is on the verge of recovering its rights****. We must welcome, as did the Surrealists, the re-entry into modern life of* ***homo ludens****, the imaginative man at play, the intuitive visionary.*

– **Mel Gooding, 1991**

Geraldine Burke: This paper is situated at a place where art meets collaboration and speaks to the *Cultures and Transitions* theme proclaimed by the InSEA 30th World Congress of Art Educators. Our collaborative story began as an *art-i-fax/art-e-post* project that we initiated via the artsednet@web1.pub.getty.edu and has led to combined art projects and exhibitions across the globe. Our initial project extended well beyond original intentions. It has led to an ongoing interest in the role that collaborative art plays in individual and group practice, as well as, in art curriculum. The experience has also informed our use of technology within the art realm and has led to an awareness of the importance of the *technology trail* that exists within and across cultures. This paper itself has been constructed as a collaborative project over the Internet and examines the thoughts of an Australian art educator alongside those of her American counterpart.

Numo Jaeger: What is being accomplished with the *art-i-fax/art-e-post* and other Internet art process is something that has been achieved on a one-to-one basis between artists over time. Now technology allows us to move it across the globe. Artists are natural collaborators. We build on, borrow and manipulate ideas from the generations of practitioners that have come before us. We have trained each other in the apprenticeship programs and formed close associations with other artists as Pissarro did with Seurat, Signac and the critic Feneon (Goldwater, 1945). We have worked together to set up group shows emphasizing a common theme or individual theme but pull together in a final presentation and the "art opening" or event. The writer Leonard Shlain expresses this idea when he says, *Art is the singular harbinger of universal mind* (Shlain, 1991).

Now artists can and do, collaborate on a daily basis with other artists around the world. 500 years ago people didn't necessarily know of other cultures' existence around the world. 200 years ago it was a several week sea voyage and only sailors or the very rich could meet and experience other cultures. 20 years ago you could fly across the world and someone with moderate means could once or twice in their lifetime work with other cultures. Today's world offers new opportunities. Just as the club and the spear extended the capabilities of the cave dweller-hunter, today technologies extend an individual's imagination allowing minds to interact across time and distance. The low-tech *art-i-fax/art-e-post*, exquisite corpse project (detailed in the "Warm Technology" section below) though a simple parlor art game makes visible the interplay of minds and cultures. This is an excellent way to incorporate the study of world cultures into the art curriculum at any level.

Geraldine Burke: *Art-i-fax*/Art-e-post Intentions

The *art-i-fax/art-e-post* project seeks to cross cultural boundaries using art and technology as its means of communication. It involves the making of collaborative artworks by students, artists and other interested parties as both a local and global form of cultural communication. It is inclusive of all age groups and seeks to engage with various levels of technology. The on-going nature of the communication is an important premise as is the *open-domain* acceptance of images created for this purpose. A web site featuring pertinent examples and exemplary images is located in the *Art-e-bytes virtual gallery*, Faculty of Education, Monash University, accessible via the *art-e-mail* icon at http://www.education.monash.edu.au/peninsula/art-e-bytes/.

Once a group or individual has agreed to participate in an *art-i-fax/art-e-post* project the process is relatively straightforward. Coordinators for the project are set up at each point of communication and agree upon a starting point for shared imagery and text, be it thematic, (such as the new *Flora Fauna 2000* project that we introduced at our workshop for the InSEA congress), or open-ended. To start, each participant creates an A4 image and another sheet detailing name, institution, meaning of images, intention of symbols or mythology is attached. The recipient then manipulates or adds to the image and text before faxing it back to the original sender. Alternatively participants with access to the Internet send attachments while others may post drawings and text via traditional modes. The process may then extend to other interested parties if desired or continue as an ongoing art/text interchange between the original participants.

There is an essential mutual understanding of the *public domain* status of these images and accompanying text. That images will be manipulated, changed and possibly re-used by the recipient *beyond* the original control of the initial artist is clearly understood by all participants. To this effect the projects initiated by Monash University, Faculty of Education have included a copyright agreement. The notion of creating publicly accessible images of an ephemeral nature has been a challenging concept for some participants and has encouraged and inspired us to explore interesting parallels prevalent in contemporary art practice as a result.

This has had a flow on effect in that the context for collaboration has led to a greater understanding of other contemporary notions prevalent in contemporary western society. As a result, the *ephemeral* nature of some artworks, the tendency to *manipulate or appropriate images*, the possibility for *seriation* resulting from the use of technology, the formation of *hybrid* images and media and the intriguing notion of *originality* have featured in my sessions on collaborative art. Similarly I have included reference to Edward De Bono's *Six Thinking Hats* in order to address possible thinking styles that would encourage a broader perspective of the collaborative process for our students.

In preparation for the initial *art-i-fax/art-e-post* project students, from Monash University, Faculty of Education, were first introduced to various collaborative artworks making particular reference to the playful nature of the *exquisite corpse* parlour games as practiced by the Surrealists. These games are reminiscent of *Heads, Bodies and Legs* in English and *Petit Papiers* in France (Brotchie, 1991).

Warm Technology – from Analogue to Digital and Back Again.

To encourage an open-ended and emergent interplay of images students made their own *exquisite corpse* images by utilizing the notion of automatic suggestion. These initial images were passed from student to student, with each new participant interpreting the text-based suggestion of the previous party. Students noted the humorous and playful combinations of oft time bizarre mixtures of animal, vegetable, human and mechanical parts. Each group of participants then created a name and story for their creature or landscape. (Interestingly images created in a horizontal format tended towards landscape associated concepts whereas those created in a vertical format tended toward a creature based set of images.) Students generally

noted that the imaginative and spontaneous outcomes were a result of the process of collaboration. Many felt that the lucid interplay of images would not have been possible had the images been created by an artist working by themselves.

Collaborative images were also created by digital means. We deliberately employed a user-friendly program, such as *KidPix Studio*, so that technicalities did not over-ride spontaneity. Students created primal forms for faces and torsos and then moved from computer to computer to add various features until finally an entire body was formed. Each version of the emerging caricature was saved, highlighting the possibility of creating multiple possibilities for image making and storage. Notions such as ownership, copyright, originality, output and storage possibilities were discussed in order to prepare students for participation in the more globally focussed *art-i-fax/art-e-post* project. *This aspect of the* ***project*** *deliberately modeled a means of using computer technology in an overtly social way within a local environment* (Burke, 1998).

The pedagogical outcomes have currency with the Reggio Emilia approach to learning such as learning through revisitation, and also the importance of group work. After many years experience working in preprimary schools in Reggio Emilia, Vera Vecchi, an *Atelierista* states that, *I realize more and more the importance of the work done among the peer groups of children. We spend a great deal of energy in thinking about, and providing, instruments and strategies to support this way of working as a vital act of learning and a path toward social competence and maturity* (Edwards, 1988).

Types of Technology

The *art-i-fax/art-e-post* project does not attempt to favor the *defining (*digital) technology of our time. Rather it proclaims an inclusive array of communication possibilities in order to utilize the potential of each technology and media, recognizing that each technology offers its own aesthetic. This creates contrast and dynamism through juxtaposition and has offered an intriguing offshoot, namely a growing awareness of copying technologies as provided by the photocopier machine, fax, scanner and e-mail process. It has also informed participants' awareness to the cultural and historical role of methodology. A superceded technology in one area of the world may be the main stay of another. The ease at which an American High School can access funds to send off a batch of faxes provides a stark contrast to the students involved in the project in the Cook Islands who pressed lightly with their pencils in order to make them last longer.

Many of the first *art-i-faxes* were created by pen or pencil, and were then faxed to a recipient who would then photocopy and manipulate this original image which was then re-faxed or e-mailed back to the original sender. It is noteworthy that as each image was 'copied/depicted' or recopied the distance each image traveled from its original state challenged the essence of its origins. Many participants actually used the so-called *shortcomings* of a given technology to create an expressive mark. This tendency is explained well by the American Artist Pati Hill. She says of her use of electrographics to make art: *It (the photocopier machine) repeats my words perfectly as many times as I ask it to, but when I show it a hair curler it hands me back a space ship, and when I show it the inside of a straw hat it describes the eerie joys of a descent into a volcano* (Schwartz, 1996).

Aesthetic Chess and the Refluxus Group

Individual art practice can also be nourished by involvement in a collaborative art group. For example, the *Refluxus* art group was originally formed to participate in a one-off international art collaboration but its members were so invigorated by the encounter that we decided to form a locally based exchange. *Refluxus'* intention is to encourage a state of flux and possibility within each artwork. We wish to challenge the notion of the artist creating artwork in isolation, and to draw inspiration from the Surrealist and Fluxus movements. *Refluxus* also acknowledges the important role that the Annandale Realists have played in Australian art history and collaborative art practice. As they did, we attempt to utilize the concept of *aesthetic chess* where joint endeavor and

discussion takes a playful approach to media and concepts. Our work can be seen at http://www.education.monash.edu.au/peninsula/art-e-bytes/refluxus. The site explores our manifesto, concepts, games and the starting points used to create our mixed media work. These departure points include *automatic suggestions, chance encounters, found objects* and *newsworthy events*. Of interest to teachers and school students is the procedure that each artist/instigator has nominated for inclusion in their project.

Rethinking the Other

The collaborative experience has greatly influenced my individual practice. I now deliberately oscillate between thinking styles in the making of my artworks, however, I tend to categorize each approach within the realm of a particular discipline. I am conscious of the *role-play* between artist, naturalist, researcher, interviewer, cultural commentator, historian, etc. It is as if each viewpoint offers the sum of a given theme and therefore allows a greater insight through which to express my images and ideas.

Edward De Bono's *Six Thinking Hats* has proven an invaluable resource. He who would have us view the world as if wearing six colored hats, each one suggestive of a thinking style in itself, and each one interchangeable with another. The hats encompass a broad range of attitudes. *White hat* is neutral and objective; *Red hat* indicates an emotional viewpoint. *Black hat* examines negative aspects, whereas, *Yellow hat* suggests a positive thinking approach. *Green hat* offers a creative and lateral perspective and the *Blue hat* signifies organizational skills [1].

Different disciplines view the same image very differently. I understand his work as saying, ***look again, look at this from another perspective.*** He argues for a self-conscious awareness regarding point of view. His work also speaks to the potential involved in revisiting and exploring perspectives as with the Reggio Emilia philosophy. These influences have encouraged my own project-based approach to image making and have empowered me to view my artwork through many vantage-points including those of scientific and mathematical origin. Michael Heim, the renowned technology and culture commentator, states that the notion of *"world" is a plural concept* and that *each world makes its own context and rules of intelligibility* (Heim, 1998). The collaborative art process goes some way to reveal the richness and diversity of each culture or individual's art practice and can, in the process, reveal a world within the self.

Numo Jaeger: High school students at Sir Francis Drake High School http://drake.marin.k12.ca.us/ in Marin County, who were in a special program called, "The Revolution of Core Knowledge", were introduced to the *art-i-fax/art-e-post* project as an extension of their art/geography unit. The "ROCK" program is an integrated studies program where teachers work in a core team, which consists of art/drama, science, history and English. Project-Based learning is based on a program funded by The Autodesk Foundation.

In 1995, with the use of the Internet, students and teachers were able to have immediate communication with other teachers and students from all around the globe. Students at Drake High School were fascinated by the visual images sent by other students in Australia. They found it hard to believe that the work actually came from another country. The project was repeated with students at another high school in the San Francisco Bay Area and students at a primary school in Australia. The high school students took on the role of older sibling after reading and viewing the works of their young counter parts from across the world. Participants found the different use of language enlightening and their common language used comforting.

1.N.B.In conversation Dr. Andi Horvath, Head Curator of the Human Mind and Body Section of the Museum of Victoria noted that, De Bono does not appear to have a hat that addresses cultural context (August 1999). This is an oversight, and one that I actively seek to redress in the context of my work.

The value of collaboration is that it expands an individual's frame of reference, triggers new ideas for the artist and new information to respond to. When someone responds to your work it makes you look at your work differently which also changes your viewpoint. A comment from the exhibition, "An International Visual Dialogue with FAX ART" at Studio One Art Center in Oakland, California in 1998 by an art student at the Academy of Art College in San Francisco explains this concept, *Communicating with people from around the world helps create a global perspective. Even though people are separated by natural land barriers, language differences, and cultural and religious beliefs, all human beings share the need to communicate with each other. Art is a universal expression that can unite people; it is a language that we can all understand...The world may seem very large to us at times, but it is communication that brings us closer together.* (N.B. the following student quotes are also taken from students at the Academy of Art College in San Francisco.)

Transformation today might begin with learning to think. Learning to think requires self-knowledge. Self-knowledge requires awareness of others. As Thomas Moore, in his work *The Care of the Soul* states, "In many traditional cultures a person becomes an adult by hearing the secret stories of the community that have been handed down over generations. Elders give instructions, teaching, the elements of ritual and art. Black Elk describes this process in detail in his memoirs of growing up in the Ogalala Sioux. Sometimes the neophyte has to endure ordeals designed to draw out the adult. The point is to stir the young person so deeply that he or she experiences a major transformation of character." (1992). What if the world and its people are going through this transformation to *adultness*? We have the possibilities now to communicate and share our stories, our art, to endure ordeals and draw out the adult. This simple collaborative process pulls together cultures and transforms the art and the individual. We look at ourselves slightly differently. When we are looking at other cultures and in the process of transition we may see, feel and experience things, which we do not like or don't want to know about but experiencing them opens our hearts and minds.

Another San Francisco Academy of Art student feels that creating art is a way of staying in touch with basic human values and by participating in the global *art-i-fax/art-e-post* project we share these values. She comments on how our lives are materialistic and isolated but through art she deals with the fight between this superficial society and her deeper, stronger spirit that is in search of something more meaningful. She is highly affected by the image about the kangaroo killings and writes to the artist, *Your image about the kangaroo killings moved me very much. I think as artists we are very aware of the environments we live in and we have a responsibility to speak up about what we see and feel...Like everywhere in the world these old cultures are being destroyed so that the modern civilization can move on. Facts like that make me doubt the sanity of the human race and leave me feeling very empty. To remember all those forgotten people, I created this artwork. It is titled: ...but their spirit was never broken...*

As an educator, my interest in collaboration is in the creating of inclusive community Creating a space or spaces, virtual or real, that invite interested people to belong to a group is an exciting project. The *art-i-fax/art-e-post* project celebrates the differences in our cultural heritage in the initiate's image. It illustrates visually, communication, through the altering of the images. It shows the cycle of life and our connection to each other on the planet by travelling back to the maker, or on to others, as it spreads its influence. It promotes global teambuilding.

An exchange student from Istanbul, Turkey at the San Francisco Academy of Art School notes that, *I think it's important to communicate with people in other countries, as it's crucial for all human beings to be united as one despite our cultural and miscellaneous differences. Through understanding each other, we can be open to anything different and/or new to us, and thus letting ourselves improve constantly on the way to becoming better human beings.* Currently there is a great deal of interest in collaboration in North American schools. As Diana Pounder in her book *Restructuring Schools for Collaboration* writes words to the effect that teachers collaborating with

other teachers in interdisciplinary programs, site-based management, participative decision-making, and shared decision influence are the most popular. Schools are interested in collaborating with business and other social organizations.

The computer is a powerful focusing tool and technology is opening up new doors of perception. You can step into another reality. Philip Hofstetter and the Yaxuna Archaeology Project at California State University, Hayward http://www.mythologic.com have been working with archaeologists to develop websites and interactive media on Mayan topics. As Hofsteetter notes in an e-mail communication to me (9/5/'99) they will be collaborating with IBM Almaden research lab to do the same in augmented reality technology. The possibilities seem infinite.

As a caution, the computer at this point lacks the tactile sensory qualities, because it is such a potent focusing tool we stop looking at the world around us and view the world from inside the computer screen. The analogue world should not be ignored for the digital world. The computer refines and abstracts reality. All you have to do is experience a leaf from a tree where you are simultaneously seeing its color, shape, form and feeling the temperature and texture and smelling its aroma to realize how far from the organic analog world the computer is at this point. The *art-i-fax/art-e-post* has a humorous side to the final outcome of art works. It can poke fun at the seriousness of the age of the Internet.

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